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## Biblical Notes.

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**The Table of the Nations, Gen. 10.** The immediate goal of the Israelite compiler, says Prof. H. E. Ryle, is to give the history of the chosen family, but previously he has to account for the other nations. This list of names therefore, at first thought wearisome, reminded the Israelite that the heathen were his brethren, that Israel was only one among the nations of the earth, albeit chosen for a special work. The nations are presented by this table genealogically, which relationship is not to be understood literally, but as giving pictorially the ethnology of prehistoric times. The names given are not those of individuals, but of nations or tribes. It is not easy to see how the various races have been distributed among the three sons of Noah. It is not a distribution upon the basis of color, or of language. It is rather a classification according to geographical situation. The descendants of Shem occupy a central position, the Hamites lie chiefly to the south, the Japhethites on the north. The ethnology of prehistoric times must not be confounded with modern scientific conceptions of ethnology.

**The Tower of Babel.** This strange narrative preserves a tradition which goes back to very early times, and its obvious purpose was to account for the two great phenomena of human society—the distinction of races, and the diversity of language. The origin of these must have seemed one of the greatest mysteries to the men of the ancient world. The familiar story of the Tower of Babel supplied an answer suited to the comprehension of a primitive time. Its legendary character appears in the derivation of the name Babel, from a Hebrew word meaning confusion of tongues. Notice also the polytheistic expression in v. 7, comp. Gen. 1:26. This tower referred to is probably to be traced to some remarkable structure or gigantic ruins of an ancient building either within the walls or in the vicinity of Babylon. It may have been the celebrated Tower of Birs-Nimrud at Borsippa, a little southwest of the city; but more likely it was the Temple of Merodach within Babylon, which was erected in prehistoric times. The narrative has a plain religious significance, emphasizing the supremacy of God over all the inhabitants of the world, that evil is the result of man's seeking his own glory, and that rebellion against God is the true source of discord. So writes Prof. Ryle in the *Expository Times*.

**"They that Fear the Lord."** This phrase is used generally in the New Testament to denote Gentiles who have attached themselves to the worship and customs of the Jews in a manner more or less close (cf. Acts 10:2, 22; 13:16, 26, 43, 50; et al), says Prof. A. B. Davidson. Such men had not entered the community of Israel through the rites of circumcision and baptism; they probably for the most part went no farther than to acknowledge one God, keep the moral law, recognize the obligation of the Sabbath and the duty of privi-

lege of worship in the synagogue, though perhaps some of the ritual ordinances might be undertaken by them, as abstinence from swine's flesh. It appears that considerable freedom was allowed to such adherents. The Jews of the Dispersion insisted only on essentials, in this following the prophets, cf. Isa. 56:1-6, who made the strangers joining Israel to stand entirely above the Law, requiring only that they recognize the God of Israel as God alone, and keep the Sabbath. The question arises, was the phrase "they that fear God" already used in the Old Testament to designate Gentile converts? This is generally answered in the affirmative, at least as regards Psa. 115:9; 118:2ff; 135:19f; and perhaps Psa. 22:23. Prof. Davidson discusses these passages, and concludes in much doubt as to whether the Old Testament uses the phrase in such a sense. Certainly its general usage is of the devout Israelites.

**Samaria.** Prof. Geo. A. Smith writes of this district of Palestine in *The Expositor*. The Vale of Shechem is the true physical centre of the Holy Land, from which the features of the country radiate and group themselves most clearly. Samaria is broken up into more or less isolated groups of hills, with intervening plains which, though not large, are fine and arable. The openness of Samaria is her most prominent feature, and tells most in her history. Few invaders were successfully resisted. While chariots are but seldom mentioned as in use in Judea, they appear frequently in Samaria's history, owing to the openness and accessibility of the country. For this reason also the surrounding paganism poured into and vanquished this district of Palestine. The second striking characteristic of Samaria is her central position. As to location, Jerusalem is in a comparatively out-of-the-way and uncomfortable place. It is on Mt. Ebal that one best realizes the size of the Holy Land. Hermon and the heights of Judah both within sight, while Jordan is not twenty, the coast not thirty, miles away—and that one most strongly feels the wonder of the influence of so small a territory on the history of the world. The third feature of Samaria is her connection with Eastern Palestine—Abraham and Jacob came from the East to Shechem. The trans-Jordanic provinces were occupied by the tribes from the first entrance into Canaan, and after the Disruption remained within Northern Israel. The fourth feature of Samaria is her connection with Carmel, which was from the earliest times a sanctuary, a place of retreat and of worship. It was a mount on which Jehovah stood.

**On Matthew 5:21, 22.** In the ordinary interpretation of this passage, says Prof. J. P. Peters, in the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, the *egō de legō* is supposed to refer to three clauses, thus (literally translated): "I say to you (1) that every one who is angry with his brother is in danger of the judgment; (2) but whosoever saith to his brother, Raca, is in danger of the Sanhedrin; (3) but whosoever saith, Thou fool, is in danger of the gehenna of fire." And it is understood that there is an accumulating, climacteric development in the thought. But as far as number 2 is concerned, it is quite the reverse of a climax. It should be interpreted as a saying attributed to "them of old time," and not to Christ. We then have the correct idea of the passage as follows: "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old, 'Thou shalt not murder, and whosoever murdereth is liable to the judgment.' But I say to you, that every one who is angry with his brother is liable to the judgment. And, it was said by them of old, 'Whosoever saith to his brother, Raca, is liable to the Sanhe-